

Mystery of Young Belmont's \$15,000 Gambling Debt

Oh! Yes, Raymond Admits He Signed the I. O. U., But, Strange to Say, He Just Can't Remember a Thing About What Happened That Night at Newport

A SINGULAR atmosphere of mystery enwraps the latest predicament in which young Mr. Raymond Belmont has become involved. Raymond is the second son of August Belmont, the noted financier and sportsman, who made many millions out of the subway into which New Yorkers are daily jammed and packed.

Raymond's latest predicament is to be sued for payment of an "I. O. U." for \$15,000, which he is alleged to have signed after playing roulette unsuccessfully at Newport. That was away back in August, 1912, nearly eight years ago.

That was three months before Raymond married the pretty chorus girl, Ethel Lorraine, from whom he was separated after eight days of wedded life.

It was at a period when Raymond was doing many unconventional things in the bohemian haunts of New York and other places—things of which he does not like to be reminded now and of which Mr. Belmont, Sr., does not like to hear in the least. Since then Raymond has served with credit in the army during the war and has married a beautiful and charming young woman of the highest social position. And now this escapade of nearly eight years ago, with many accompanying circumstances, is brought before the courts, like an old skeleton, to disturb his peace, and there is no avoiding it.

The strangest of all the circumstances connected with the suit is that while Mr. Belmont admits that the I. O. U. is signed by him, he declares that he has no recollection whatever of having signed it and has no recollection of ever having had the pleasure of meeting "Mr. Edward W. Rankin," who makes the claim against him.

Who is this mysterious "Edward W. Rankin?" His real address and place of "business" are concealed in his complaint.

Why has he waited for seven years and a half before bringing his suit?

Why does he have the "nerve" to bring a suit for a gambling debt when the law states most explicitly that such debts cannot be collected?

Are there some concealed facts which make it possible to collect the debt?

Why does not Mr. August Belmont, who has millions and has been a patron of sport and racing, pay his son's debt, even if it is a gambling debt?

Has a "sport" any right to repudiate a gambling debt?

What was the condition of Mr. Raymond Belmont in which he could not remember signing an I. O. U. for \$15,000?

Who were the friends that accompanied the young man and let him lose a large sum of money when in such a very forgetful mood?

The mere shreds of fact that are available concerning this old episode call up a scene of wild revelry and extravagance in the fashionable Summer colony. How much did Raymond Belmont lose before he gave the I. O. U.? How much did the other men lose—or win?

Edward W. Rankin's complaint against Raymond Belmont has been filed in the New York Supreme Court by his attorney, Henry Hickman, of No. 50 Pine street. It is strangely short and states that Raymond Belmont gave the defendant an I. O. U. for \$15,000 in August, 1912; that payment had been demanded and nothing had been paid; wherefore plaintiff demands judgment.

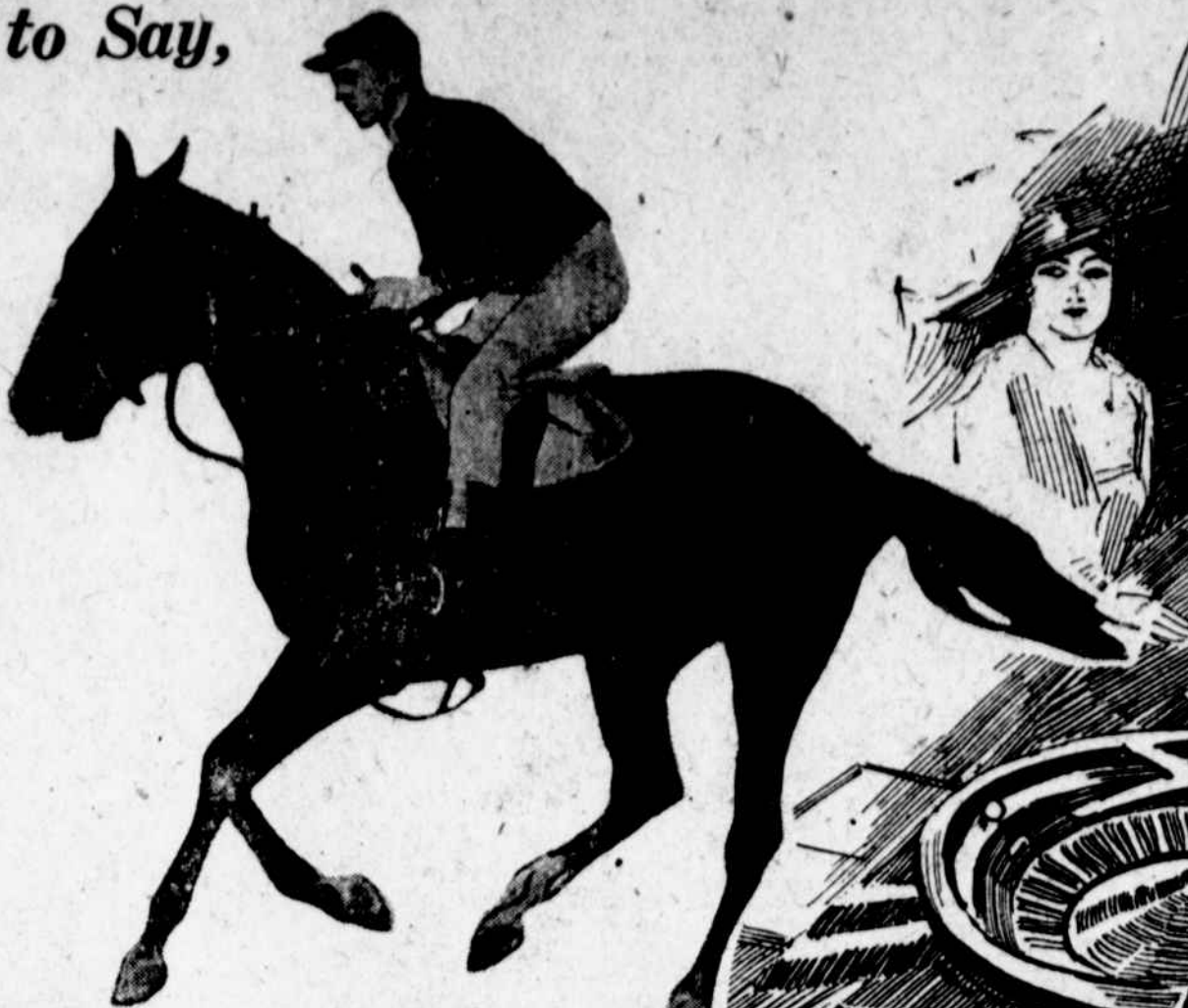
Raymond Belmont's answer, made through his attorney, Henry A. Uterhart, of No. 27 Cedar street, contains a little more information. After admitting that the I. O. U. is signed by Belmont and declaring that it is outlawed by the Statute of Limitations, because the action was not commenced within six years, the answer reveals how the money was lost:

"5. The defendant further alleges that the agreement in writing mentioned in the complaint was without consideration and was illegal and void; that the same was given in settlement of a gambling debt; that in or about the month of August, 1912, defendant was engaged in a game of chance, known by the name of roulette; that in such game the defendant lost the sum of fifteen thousand (\$15,000) dollars, and in settlement of such loss made and delivered to the proprietor and manager of the house at which the said gambling occurred, the said written agreement mentioned in said complaint.

"Wherefore defendant demands judgment; that the complaint herein be dismissed with costs."

That a young sportsman, whose father was long known as the principal patron of horse racing in New York, should refuse to pay a debt on the ground that it was a gambling transaction seems surprising and has aroused some lively discussion. If a man "sits in" to win money at a wicked game of chance, and loses, why should he not pay? Mr. Hickman, the

Young Raymond Belmont, Son of August Belmont, on His Racing Horse Bivouac.



The Present Charming Mrs. Raymond Belmont, Formerly Miss Carolyn Hulbert.



Interesting Snapshot of the Chorus Girl, Mrs. Raymond Belmont, Whom the Young Sportsman Left After Eight Days of Married Life.

plaintiff's attorney, made these significant comments on the matter:

"Seems strange, doesn't it, that a son of the distinguished financier and prominent sportsman should turn out to be a welcher. The game in which younger Mr. Belmont participated was attended by other men equally prominent in society and finance. If Raymond had won, no doubt he would have left the house that evening with his winnings and have considered that he had put in a good night's entertainment.

"But he lost, it seems, and now he turns welcher.

"Of course, there is no merit to his defense that the suit is barred by the Statute of Limitations, because from the seven years that elapsed between the giving of the I. O. U. and the inauguration of the suit the plaintiff is entitled to deduct the two years that young Mr. Belmont was in the service of Uncle Sam. He was, I believe, a lieutenant, and was active on the front in France. His heroism in France makes it all the more incomprehensible that he should welch on the gambling debt, for among gentlemen a gambling debt is generally paid unhesitatingly before other debts.

"I suppose it will be necessary to get the young hero on the witness stand to explain why he has made an exception to his code of honor in this particular case."

Attorney Hickman declared positively that he would push the case to trial. When asked how he could expect to win a suit for a gambling debt, he answered:

"I will not discuss that point. Not another word, sir."

From one source it was learned that the gambling house referred to was Richard Canfield's temple of chance at Newport, one of the famous establishments of its kind in America. It was at Canfield's New York place that Reginald Vanderbilt lost a large sum of money, reported to be \$100,000, and other rich youths had similar experiences, both in New York and Newport. It was the general understanding that Canfield allowed unlimited credit to men whose financial standing was known to him. Edward W. Rankin, it was believed, was the manager of Canfield's Newport place.

Raymond Belmont's lawyer, Mr. Uterhart, said that he was not authorized to state what was the Belmont family opinion about gambling debts, but there was no doubt that this claim could not be collected. He had had a brief talk with young Belmont, who did not have the least recollection of signing the I. O. U., but as he had played a few games of roulette he was willing to admit it might have happened that way.

Mr. Uterhart intimated that while a man ought to pay his losses at a friendly poker game or any genuine sporting transaction, there were other occasions when the higher morality might justify him in repudiating a gambling debt. He pointed

to the general understanding that no professional roulette wheel is strictly fair to the player. The lawyer suggested that he might make some interesting remarks on this subject if compelled to do so.

Why was not the claim made sooner? It appears that polite gambling house keepers are very patient about troubling wealthy patrons to pay their debts. It is not good form to inform the father of a young debtor. The plaintiff says that

Lorraine, a chorus girl of extremely modest professional standing, whose real name was Ethel Helen Lindner. They were married in Jersey City by a minister who was unaware of the bridegroom's high social position.

Mr. August Belmont when first informed of the marriage declared it had never taken place. When convincing proof of it reached him he used strong language.

Eight days after the marriage young Belmont disappeared from the little New York flat where he had been making his home with his bride. She never saw him again, in spite of many efforts and her repeated declarations that she loved Raymond for himself alone.

August Belmont was credited with having spirited the young man away efficiently, although at the time he declared he knew nothing about the boy's whereabouts. It was stated that Mr. Belmont employed a sleuth known as "Camera Eye" Sheridan to study the bride's record, hunt for flaws in the marriage ceremony and perform other useful services.

Another interesting figure was concerned in the affair. August Belmont's second wife, who was formerly the clever actress, Eleanor Robson, was said to be desirous of settling Raymond's difficulties. She made every effort to lead him to a more settled and dignified mode of life.

Immediately after the separation from his bride young Raymond was hustled on board a steamship for England. There he spent a considerable period, while his wife was hunting for him in New York, under the care of Sir Bache Cunard, a distinguished British sportsman and horseman, who has large racing stables at Market Harborough. There the hard exercise of riding and playing polo and the change of scene helped him to forget the New York chorus girl, and also saved him from embarrassing questions by lawyers and others.

Very different from the attitude of August Belmont was that of the bride's father, Albert Lindner, the worthy owner of a sporting works.

"The doors of my home are always open to Ethel and to Raymond," said Mr. Lindner. "There is nothing I can think of that can cause objection by Mr. August Belmont to his son's choice."

"Raymond, I understand, is in love with Ethel. He is of age and so is Ethel. It has been known, generally, by their friends that the two were engaged."

"Ethel received a good education. Her home surroundings have always been wholesome. There is a difference in wealth, I admit, but as I understand law that is no ground for a divorce."

Mrs. Raymond Belmont, while waiting for some settlement with the Belmonts, expressed herself thus concerning August Belmont:

"I got a rotten deal from the Belmonts. However, in October, I'm going to sue for alimony, and then I'll show a certain party if I'm one whose affections can be rudely treated. And, believe me, I always knew my dear father-in-law was mean, but it was not until after my marriage that I really knew how mean he was."

Despairing of recovering her husband, Mrs. Raymond Belmont brought suit for a separation, in order to obtain an allow-

ance for support. She declared that she would not think of seeking an absolute divorce. On the stand she told how generous Raymond had been to her; had told her he possessed a fortune in his own right; had given her diamond tiaras and other gifts; had promised \$400 a month for housekeeping, and a lovely little cottage. Mr. DeLancey Nicoll, the noted traction lawyer, acting for Mr. Belmont, subjected her to a severe questioning concerning her past.

On the witness stand August Belmont said that his son Raymond had squandered \$128,961 in four years, the money coming principally from the estate of his deceased mother.

He also spent \$3,000 a year, which his father gave him as a personal allowance, and \$75 a month, which he received as a clerk in his father's banking house. The only outside business he had engaged in was dog breeding, and that had proved a loser.

Ethel Lorraine obtained a separation and an allowance for alimony.

Young Belmont was a very well-known figure in the gay quarters of New York before his marriage with the chorus girl. It was an attack on him in Walter Swiney's Thirty-first street resort that put Swiney in jail and started a clean-up of what was then the Tenderloin.

Raymond had a habit of buying anything that pleased him, especially if it happened to be a dog, a diamond collar or a fur coat, without regard to price. If he didn't have enough money with him, he would hand out a card in a lordly manner and say:

"I'm Mr. Raymond Belmont. Send the bill to me."

While Mrs. Raymond Belmont enjoyed the status of separated wife and sported the family name, she caused the Belmont family pain on several occasions. She exhibited her Pekinese toy spaniel Pansy at the fashionable Minnesota dog show, where the canine exhibits of the Belmont family have always occupied the place of honor and won first prizes. The August Belmonts stayed away from this show rather than meet their unwelcome namesake and her spaniel carried away the highest possible prize.

Mrs. Raymond Belmont remained a separated wife for four years, and then grew tired of her status, perhaps because she needed a larger income. She then brought suit for absolute divorce, in the course of which some interesting evidence was given about another affair in which the young sportsman was concerned.

The divorce was granted and a private settlement of the wife's claims for alimony was made with the Belmont family. This, it is understood, was liberal.

Within a few days of the divorce Raymond Belmont married Miss Carolyn Hulbert, of Middleburg, Va., a beautiful young society girl, noted for her proficiency in riding and handling horses.

Then came the war, in which Raymond Belmont served at the front as first lieutenant at the headquarters of the Seventy-eighth Division. He served with credit, was decorated and returned a mature man.

Now comes this I. O. U., a reminder of his wildest, gayest days, to plague him!